

# Ask The Expert: Selecting Appropriate Hearing Protection—Ear Buds v. Ear Plugs



## QUESTION

Do safety standards ban use of ear buds to listen to music while working in manufacturing? Can workers use ear buds for hearing protection?

## ANSWER

Yes and Maybe

## EXPLANATION

First, we need to define our terms.

**Ear buds** are the things you stick in your ears to listen to music. Use of ear buds by plant workers creates safety risks if:

- It distracts the worker;
- It interferes with their ability to communicate with co-workers, supervisors and other personnel;
- It interferes with the effectiveness of the hearing protection they're using; and/or
- The cord connecting the ear buds to the device may get entangled in moving machine parts.

**Ear plugs** are a form of hearing protection that may be used as long as:

- They're appropriate to protect workers from the noise hazards to which they're exposed based on sound level and duration;
- Comply with CSA Z94.2-02, Hearing Protection Devices 'Performance, Selection, Care, and Use;
- Fit properly; and
- Are properly used.